

# SCOTTISH BORDERS COUNCIL POLICE, FIRE & RESCUE AND SAFER COMMUNITIES BOARD

MINUTES of Meeting of the POLICE, FIRE &  
RESCUE AND SAFER COMMUNITIES  
BOARD held Via Microsoft Teams on Friday,  
27 August 2021 at 9.30 am

Present:- Councillors G. Turnbull (Chairman), D. Moffat, N. Richards, E. Robson,  
H. Scott, E Small, Mr M Dickson - NHS Borders and Ms M Simpson -  
Voluntary Sector.

Safer Communities and Community Justice Manager

In Attendance:- Chief Superintendent J McKenzie, Chief Inspector V Fisher, Local Senior  
Officer S Gourlay, Group Commander T Collins, Scottish Fire & Rescue  
Service; Senior Policy Advisor, Communities and Partnership Manager, and  
Democratic Services Officer (F. Henderson), VAW Co-ordinator/DAAS  
Service Manager - Andrea Beavon, James Ayling, Henry Coyle, Michele  
Meldrum.

## 1. **WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS**

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the online meeting, particularly Mr James Ayling who was attending his first meeting as the NHS representative.

## 2. **MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING**

2.1 There had been circulated copies of the Minute of the meeting held on 14 May 2021.

## **DECISION**

**APPROVED the Minute.**

## 3. **PROGRESS REPORTS/UPDATES ON SERVICE MATTERS - POLICE SCOTLAND**

3.1 With reference to paragraph 3 of the minute of 14 May 2021, there had been circulated copies of Police Scotland's Scrutiny Report for Quarter 1. Chief Superintendent McKenzie introduced the Q1 report, highlighting the main points from the report. He explained that as the vaccination programme advanced and COVID restrictions ease, the changes in behaviour, criminality and policing demands predicted in the Q4 report of last year had begun to materialise. There had been a dramatic fall in anti-social behaviour calls; the unprecedented demand experienced during the previous 12 months attributed in most part to breaches of COVID regulations. Domestic offending remains a concern and had impacted too on common assault figures. Extortion and sexual offending continued on an upward trend, a significant proportion of which was perpetrated remotely via the internet or other modes of telecommunication, and was non-contact in nature. A significant proportion of sexual offending was also non-recent in nature, more reflective of victims' willingness to come forward, rather than a current change in offending. Housebreakings had also risen in number, a symptom of more people spending more time away from their homes. Scottish Borders did appear out of kilter with other areas of the country and detection rate and wider performance measures compared very favourably. As previously discussed, it would be of limited value to use 2020 performance figures as a benchmark and 5 year average figures had been included in order to provide context. While the recent events had been significantly challenging, the most challenging

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may still lie ahead. While absence through either illness or self-isolation had impacted on resources, there had been benefit from a vast reduction in court business, planned events and the night-time economy had ceased, and all but essential training had been suspended. With effect from September there would be a doubling in court hearings, with simultaneous sittings at both Jedburgh and Selkirk, resulting in doubling of witness citations. A number of events were due to recommence in the coming weeks and months; Kelso ram sales, Tour of the Borders, Tour of Britain etc.

Training would recommence, and a dedicated resource in the Scottish Borders had been secured to deliver standard and emergency response driving courses. A qualification which was essential given the vast areas and distances covered and would greatly improve operational effectiveness. The re-emergence of the night-time economy would cause demand profiles to change, and the SB-CAT shift patterns had recently altered to better service peak demands for anti-social behaviour and violence.

The United Nations Climate Conference (COP26) in Glasgow, arguably the largest and most significant policing event in Police Scotland's history would be held between 1 November and 12 November 2021. The demands and expectations would be immense and officers from across the entire United Kingdom and beyond would be drafted in to assist. The Scottish Borders would provide officers and specialist resource, and plans were well advanced in terms of maintaining service provision in the Borders.

To provide longer term resilience and improve staff retention, a number of targeted recruitment events had taken place within the Scottish Borders, encouraging people who already live here to pursue a career in policing. These exercises were beginning to yield dividends and a higher number of probationers than normally expected were coming through. The Scottish Borders had also been recognised alongside the likes of the Highlands and Islands, Argyle and Bute as an area where recruitment was a challenge. Work was ongoing to market a policing career in the Scottish Borders as a lifestyle choice in an effort to attract experienced officers from other parts of the country to settle in the Borders.

### **DECISION**

**NOTED the report.**

#### **4. PROGRESS REPORTS/UPDATE ON SERVICE MATTERS - SCOTTISH FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE**

- 4.1 With reference to paragraph 4 of the Minute of 14 May 2021, Local Senior Officer Gourlay introduced the SFRS Local Performance Plan for the period 1 April 2021 to 30 June 2021, copies of which had been circulated with the agenda. The LSO advised that it had been a challenging period but locally they were looking forward to blended working arrangements for partnerships and training. Nationally, the Scottish Government were committed to supporting the modernisation of the SFRS, central to this was broadening the role of firefighters in Scotland. There would also be a consultation around the management of Unwanted Fire Alarm signals. LSO Gourlay further advised that local fire stations were being used to deliver asymptomatic testing, as part of a partnership approach, which had received a positive community response.
- 4.2 Local Senior Officer Gourlay then went on to highlight the main points from the performance report, explaining that dwelling fires, all fire casualties, deliberate fires had all decreased. Road traffic collisions and special service casualties had increased slightly on the same period last year and unwanted Fire Alarm Signals had also increased. He explained that the SFRS had attended 365 incidents during the reporting period, and false alarms had accounted for 62% of emergency calls. There had been no major incidents in the year to date. With regard to Prevention and Protection activities, an update had been circulated with the agenda. Although performance activity had been severely curtailed because of restrictions, the SFRS had recommended high risk home safety visits and would start visiting businesses and schools when it was appropriate to do

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so. Regarding the trends relating to all deliberate fire and UFAS with a peak in quarter 1 explained that deliberate fires increased during the lighter nights, drier weather and Easter holidays and they had an appropriate tactical action plan in place. The decrease in UFAS was probably due to schools returning, with primary schools and nurseries being one of the largest offenders. In terms of reducing unwanted Fire Alarm Signals, SFRS were consulting on options in relation to operational response to Automatic Fire Alarms between 19 July and 11 October 2021 <https://firescotland.citizenspace.com/sfrs-communications/time-for-change-reducing-ufas/>

LSO Gourlay then referred to the updated 2021 SFRS Local Fire and Rescue Plan, copies of which had been circulated with the agenda. He explained that the priorities remained the same with the focus on delivering in partnership. In response to questions regarding flood rescue he discussed the resource for swift water rescue in the Scottish Borders and opportunities to upskill stations for flood level response based on past incidents. He would arrange a demonstration later this year when restrictions allowed. With regard to cross border support he advised that cooperation happened but the percentage was small.

It was reported that due to the Coronavirus pandemic the Youth Engagement Work had not been delivered although contact with many partner groups had been maintained, providing advice via social media and delivering thematic information such as Spring/Summer safety and deliberate fire-setting. Other examples of work carried out in this period were; the Community Action Team (CAT) had worked with High Schools to engage with identified fire starters; The Local Authority Liaison Officer (LALO) continued to work with 60 Primary schools and 9 secondary within the Scottish Borders Area and the CAT team had delivered "Street Feet" Road Safety sessions to primary schools. Close collaboration with partner organisations across the public and third sector continued to generate our HFSV referrals. Local crews within the Scottish Borders continued to proactively deliver the Adult/Child protection policy and procedure and had generated 6 referrals (AP1) during the period. The Local Authority Liaison Officer (LALO) continued to participate or provide information relevant to fire for the monthly Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) and successful actions from these meetings had been delivered

### **DECISION**

**NOTED the report.**

## **5. SAFER COMMUNITIES**

- 5.1 With reference to paragraph 5 of the Minute of 14 May 2021, there had been circulated copies of the Safer Communities Performance report from quarter 1 - 1 April 2021 to 30 June 2021. The report explained that as COVID-19 restrictions lifted the Unit was re-assessing working practices to match public health and corporate guidance, although some face to face activities remained restricted. Mediation services had been heavily impacted by COVID-19 lockdown measures as face to face meetings, which were the preferred method of mediation, were currently not possible. Outside site visits had been undertaken in certain circumstances to better understand the problems being experienced. The mediation officer had been committed to the Gypsy Traveller liaison role during the pandemic, in particular Victoria Park, Selkirk and a number of unauthorised encampments. The number of domestic abuse incidents reported to Police Scotland in quarter 1 of 2021/22 was 336, an increase of 6 incidents (1.8%) higher than 2020/21 at the same point. The number of referrals to the Domestic Abuse Advocacy Support (DAAS) service in quarter 1 of 2021/22 was 129, which was an increase of 28 incidents (27.7%) higher than 2020/21 at the same point. Repeat referrals to the DAAS service in quarter 1 of 2021/22 stands at 30.8%, only slightly above the target of 30% and the number of clients contacted within agreed timescales was significantly higher than the 80% baseline and currently stands at 93.9%. In terms of successes, it was reported that DAAS, as a telephone based service, had continued to offer an unbroken service to the highest risk clients throughout the

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COVID-19 restrictions and had been awarded £2500 from the NatWest's Circle Fund to provide emergency safety measures e.g. phones to high risk victims of domestic abuse, which complimented the existing Victim Support Fund and expanded the level of support that could be offered. There were 8 requests from partner agencies for domestic abuse/risk assessment training sessions which was a key function of the DAAS service as it directly influenced the number of referrals and "hard to reach" clients could be offered a more accessible service through working with the agency in a way best suited to their needs. MARAC continued to be held every four weeks via MS Teams and this had significantly improved attendance of agencies. CEDAR had been able to adapt the groupwork programme for mothers and their children to recover from their experiences of domestic abuse. A CEDAR early years domestic abuse recovery Borders pilot was being planned to support pregnant women and children under 4 who have experienced domestic abuse. Support for the pilot had been provided by the Children and Young People's Commissioning group as part of the COVID recovery programme and it was envisaged that two groups would be delivered in 2021-22. Road safety remained a key focus for the team and for the team's priority areas of focus, accidents involving motorcyclists showed an increase in casualties in quarter 1 when compared to the same quarter in 2020/21, 6 additional casualties. Accidents involving older drivers had resulted in zero killed or seriously injured in quarter 1 of 2021/22, the same as 2020/21 for the same time period. Likewise younger drivers aged 17-25 involved in accidents had resulted in zero killed or seriously injured in quarter 1 of 2021/22, the same as 2020/21 in the same time period.

### 6. **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting was scheduled to be held via Microsoft Teams on Friday, 26 November 2021 at 9.30 am.

***The meeting concluded at 12.30 pm.***